

psychiatry and psychology. Few medical authors would seem to be better qualified for this sort of inquiry.

B. S.

Report of the Committee to Investigate the Affairs and Management of the State Lunatic Asylum at Utica.

Made to the Assembly, April 27, 1884.

In a review of testimony taken by a committee of the State Senate appointed to investigate alleged abuses in insane asylums, published in the *JOURNAL* for April, 1884, reference was made to an investigation, then in progress, of the State Lunatic Asylum at Utica, "and particularly to the circumstances concerning the death of E. D. Hughes, a patient." This investigation was made by a committee of the Assembly in April last, and its report, with the testimony, making a volume of 1,400 pages, is now published.

The case of Hughes is one common in insane asylums everywhere, but so flagrant an abuse, followed by so shameful a miscarriage of justice, could happen in no other civilized country. And the disgrace which attaches to the lunacy system of the State, and to the State itself, is made worse by the fact that the killing of Hughes is only one of a series of similar outrages which have marked the recent history of the Utica Asylum. Its similarity to the case of Tarbell, who was fatally injured by his attendants in 1859, has already been noticed.¹ Another case, brought to light by this committee, and described in its report, is that of a patient named Heath, "who died within a few days after his ribs were broken by Reese," an attendant. In another, which is referred to in the report of the asylum for 1869, the patient died, on the ninth day after admission, as the result of nine fractures of the ribs and puncture of the pleural cavity. These injuries, it should be said, were claimed by Dr. Gray to have been inflicted before admission to the asylum, as were those of Tarbell, but the presumption is clearly against such an origin, and the fact that no inquest was permitted is significant.

The history of the Hughes case is quite sufficient, however, to prove the urgent necessity of reform in the Utica Asylum. It was found by a coroner's jury that this patient came to his death from injuries inflicted by his attendants, one of whom was afterward tried and convicted of manslaughter in the second degree, against the testimony of Dr. Gray and his assistants. The Assembly committee, in the present report, declare that they have unanimously reached a conclusion to the same effect. But the guilty attendant was permitted by the judge to escape with a fine of \$1,000, which was promptly paid for him, and the officers and employes of the asylum have a new assurance of impunity for any neglect or abuse of which they may be guilty in the future.

Upon the question of the care of patients by attendants generally at this asylum, the committee are "convinced that very many

¹ *Vide* vol. ix., page 286.

cases have occurred in the past, and, according to present arrangements, are not unlikely to occur in the future, where, during the absence of the physicians, patients have been treated with great roughness and, at times, with cruelty and brutality. The evidence upon which the committee unanimously base this opinion is found in the concurrent testimony of the injury-books, of the attendants, ex-attendants, patients, and former patients, and the confirmatory proof furnished by the facts in the case of Mr. Hughes." Six cases of serious abuse are described in the report, in each of which "great and unnecessary violence" was used. "It is, therefore, the unanimous belief of the committee that attendants do, from time to time, treat the patients with reckless and wanton roughness, and at times with a cruelty that is simply outrageous, considering the helpless mental condition of the patients." They believe, also, that such abuses are due to "insufficient supervision," and to the "low pay, long hours, and insufficient training of attendants." And, in conclusion: "This is the weak point in asylum management, so far as the observation of this committee has extended, and it is right here that remedial measures should be most promptly applied."

No one, after reading the testimony, could doubt the formal justice of this conclusion. But it need hardly be said that the prompt application of "remedial measures" is not yet assured. The chairman of this committee and the majority of its members, together with Dr. Gray and the President of his Board, belong to a party which has had control of the State Legislature for twenty-five years. During that period the annual disbursements of the asylum have risen from \$120,000 to \$220,000, over which there is no supervision or responsible control, as the committee declare. It is plain that until the power of party and the irresponsible use of public money can be taken from Dr. Gray, the reform of his administration will be difficult.

The report next considers the subject of female physicians in asylums for the insane. Dr. Vanderpoel, formerly a manager, and Dr. Gray are quoted against this innovation, and Dr. Stephen Smith, Lunacy Commissioner, in its favor. The various arguments, pro and con, are examined, and in conclusion the committee "unanimously recommend that one woman physician be appointed by the Board of Managers of the asylums, and that the lunacy laws be so amended as to provide for a similar appointment in all the State asylums."

In regard to the business management of the asylum, "the committee are of the opinion that the system at present pursued is loose and unbusiness-like, and that a radical change is needed." They find that "in this department, as in the medical, Dr. Gray is the practical and sole head." Certain grocery staples are purchased at a cost of five per cent. above wholesale prices in New York, the charges for freight being included. This the committee thought too large a margin of profit for such articles, and "were satisfied that the asylum paid upward of twenty per cent. more

than it should have done for miscellaneous food and drug supplies." It also appeared that the bills of the asylum were never seen by any of the managers until after they had been paid, and that, "in short, there was no supervision whatever over all the great expenditures for supplies by the Board, who left this, as they did every thing else connected with the institution, to Dr. Gray."

"As an illustration of the general ignorance on the part of the Board of the way money was spent, the committee were much struck with the fact that, some time last autumn, Dr. Gray and the steward, Mr. Dwyer, went to Syracuse and purchased for the asylum a thoroughbred Holstein bull and two cows, at a cost of \$1,350. The committee are clearly of opinion that such a purchase for the institution was entirely unwarranted and extravagant, and it appears that the purchase was made without the authority of the Board, and solely by Dr. Gray. The steward was constrained to admit that, in his judgment, the purchase of such stock was not the legitimate work of the institution, while Mr. Campbell, President of the Board of Managers, had never heard of it until asked about it on the stand, when he expressed his disapproval of it altogether."

Upon the publication of this report, some additional facts were brought to light by the newspapers, which still further illustrate Dr. Gray's system of expenditures. The cattle above referred to were purchased of Mr. Geddes, one of the Assembly committee of 1883 for the investigation of abuses in asylums, whose report was "misaid" for ten months after it was ordered printed, as noticed in the JOURNAL for April, 1884 (page 287). With great difficulty, and after much delay, this report was found by Mr. Geddes, but it has not even yet been printed.

There is a great want of harmony between the facts in regard to the financial management of the asylum, and the statements of its superintendent and managers. Dr. Gray testifies to the committee that he "knew nothing about the finances of the institution," and that they were "not under his direction or care." And the managers declare, in their report for 1880, that "all purchases of supplies, of every kind, are made by the steward," and that "every item of expenditure for asylum purposes passes under their personal examination." But in addition to what has already been given in direct contradiction of these statements, it appears that not only are all purchases made by Dr. Gray, or under his direction, but that the weekly charge for maintenance to both public and private patients is fixed by him, and the reports of the steward and treasurer are "cooked" by his hand.

Again condemning Dr. Gray's management as lax and extravagant, the committee strongly recommended a new system, under which the Comptroller of the State would be the financial head of all State charitable institutions. This is the system suggested by Mr. Apgar in his report to the Comptroller, made in 1879. The report, as the committee observe, "sharply criticised the

asylum," and Dr. Gray, in his testimony before the committee, charged Mr. Apgar with "inaccuracies and misleading statements" in matters of fact, and "unfairness in his deductions." To these charges Mr. Apgar replied in person, under oath, and "after a careful comparison of the two statements, the committee were "satisfied of the substantial accuracy of his report, so far as it relates to the asylum," and fully concur in his suggestions in favor of State supervision. They recommend, also, that this "whole subject be referred to a Board, composed of the Comptroller, the Attorney-General, and the President of the State Board of Charities, to examine and report to the next Legislature, by one or more bills, a plan for the transfer of the financial management of all the State charitable institutions to the supervision and direction of the Comptroller of the State." This recommendation was promptly acted upon by the Legislature, and the committee have shown much interest in entering upon their important work.

As the great extravagance of Dr. Gray's administration, and his attempts to conceal the same by false and deceptive accounts, were first pointed out in the JOURNAL,¹ it will be proper to notice here some extraordinary misstatements in his sworn criticism of Mr. Apgar's report. In one of the tables of this report the cost of maintenance, calculated on the total expenditures of the Utica Asylum for 1877, was shown to be almost exactly double that of the asylum at Northampton, Mass., for an equal number of patients. At Northampton this cost was \$3.50 per week for each patient, and at Utica, \$7 per week. As Dr. Gray's expenditures for the the year were \$220,000, the excess of \$110,000 is really worthy of consideration. His reply begins by declaring the comparison of asylums unfair, because that of Northampton "is largely for the chronic insane," while the Utica Asylum is "an hospital for the acute insane." He says, further, that "since 1863, the Utica Asylum has become, more conspicuously than before, an hospital for acute cases," while that of Northampton "has long been a receptacle for chronic insane." Now, it is well known that for several years the acute insane of the eastern part of this State have been committed to the Poughkeepsie and Middletown asylums, and those of the western part to the Buffalo Asylum; leaving those of the central counties only to be sent to Utica. The result has been, of course, to lessen very much the number of acute cases received at the latter institution, and Dr. Gray states, in his report for 1882, that the number of chronic cases has risen from one third to one half of those admitted in two years. The fact is, then, that his asylum has become less than before a hospital for acute cases, and is fairly compared with the Northampton Asylum.

But Dr. Gray proceeds in his testimony to make the comparison which he declares an unfair one, and he does it in a most unfair and untruthful way. He says that the charge for public patients at Utica in 1878 was \$4 per week, while that at North-

¹ *Vide* vol. ii., page 776.

ampton for the same items was \$3.50. The truth is, however, that this charge of \$3.50 per week to the State covered the cost of board, clothing, salaries, repairs, and all other items; while to the charge of \$4 per week at Utica must be added a charge of about 50 cts. per week for clothing and damages, and the sums of \$15,000 for salaries, and \$20,000 for repairs. We find, therefore, a relative excess in Dr. Gray's expenditures of \$66,000 for the year, which is increased by his greater charges for private patients.

This is bad enough, indeed, but another misrepresentation is still worse. Mr. Apgar reported that, during the thirteen years—1865–1878—the Northampton Asylum had paid, from its funds received for the board of patients, the sum of \$156,701.31 for repairs and improvements; while the Utica Asylum, with much larger receipts from patients, had drawn from the State treasury an additional sum of \$384,886.71 for the same purposes. Dr. Gray attempts to explain this excess by saying that this large sum was expended for “the renewal and enlargement of an old building, which had thus been made to accommodate one hundred and seventy-five more patients, and to abandon, at the same time, forty rooms in the basement.” But the fact is clearly stated in his reports, that the capacity of his asylum was for 600 patients at the beginning of the period referred to, and was the same at its close, in 1878. It appears, also, that the “forty rooms in the basement” were abandoned more than thirty years ago.

In the concluding pages of this able and impartial report the visitation and supervision of asylums is considered. “It appears from the testimony taken in this investigation,” say the committee, “that there is but little inspection or visitation of the Utica Asylum, either by the Board of Managers or by the State Board of Charities. In fact, it appears to be the settled policy of this institution to have the inspection and supervision of this asylum left to the medical staff.” It also seems that not only do these managers permit their superintendent to supervise himself without the slightest check, but that they are ready to do battle with all who attempt any supervision of him. Soon after its organization, in 1868, the State Board of Charities requested Dr. Gray to prepare a statement of his receipts and expenditures under a few general heads, and also of the amount of his ordinary and extraordinary expenditures, and his weekly cost per patient. The gross falsification of these returns has been repeatedly exposed in the *JOURNAL*,¹ and it has lately been testified under oath before his managers that, without exception, every one of these annual reports to the State Board for fifteen years is so falsified as practically to conceal about \$50,000 yearly in his expenditures. Nor does it appear that this deception has been carefully and cleverly done. On the contrary, it is so transparent, that Dr. Gray has apparently been himself dissatisfied with it, and has adopted a new method nearly

¹ *Vide* vol. ii., page 81; vol. iii., page 359; and vol. vii., page 357.

every year. Can we suppose that this ill-disguised "cooking" of accounts has escaped the notice of the State Board for fifteen years? Have they not more than suspected that their annual report was being used for deceiving, instead of informing, the public and the Legislature? Here is, perhaps, the origin of what the committee term "a long-standing controversy between the Utica Board of Managers and the State Board of Charities, as to the supervisory powers of the latter." In 1880, the State Board called upon the several State charitable institutions for an itemized account of their expenditures. "All responded," say the committee, "and have continued to furnish such information annually, except the State Lunatic Asylum, and the Buffalo State Asylum for the Insane. These institutions denied the right of the State Board to exact such information, and have never complied with such request." This refusal was first defended on technical grounds by the managers, but they end by denying the authority of the State Board, and declare themselves "amenable only to the authority which created them." One may admire the audacity with which the claims of a ring of local politicians to an important State institution are asserted. But these managers forget that these are not the days of Tweed and the Canal Ring? At any rate, the lines are distinctly drawn between the Legislature, the Governor, Comptroller, Attorney-General, and State Board of Charities on the one hand, and Dr. Gray and his managers on the other. Dr. Gray is, perhaps, the most experienced politician and lobbyist known in the State capital, and he is, of course, backed by all managers of asylums to whom these institutions are only a means of access to the State treasury. But the abuses, which are the necessary outcome of this theory of asylum management, have been so fully exposed that the public mind is bent upon reform, and it cannot be much longer delayed.

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